

2011 Update from the New York State Assembly



EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Sheldon Silver, Speaker • Catherine Nolan, Chairwoman

Letter from Chair:

Dear Education Advocates,

This has been a very challenging year for education. The Assembly Education Committee advocated for resources in the 2011-2012 state budget to assure that students throughout the state receive the best possible education. The committee understood that reductions had to be made in this economic climate but worked successfully to restore \$230 million in general support to public schools statewide.

As chair of the committee, I have always advocated for the full funding of public schools. I will continue to work with Speaker Silver and our committee members to advance our commitment to adequate funding for our public school system. At the same time, we will work to advance policies that promote academic achievement and student preparedness for higher education and the workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Nolan".

Catherine Nolan
Chairwoman



Chancellor Dennis Walcott addressing the Education Committee

The Assembly Education Committee invited Dennis Walcott, Chancellor of the New York City Department of Education, to address the committee. Chancellor Walcott expressed his willingness to be accessible, to listen to the concerns of both parents and teachers and to work with anybody to improve the educational opportunities for every New York City student.

Mild Traumatic Brain Injury

This year the Assembly Education Committee reported and both houses passed A8194-Nolan/S3953B-Hannon which is now before the Governor. This legislation will help schools help students who suffer mild traumatic brain injuries, commonly known as concussions. As the bill sponsor and the Assembly Education Committee Chair, I am delighted that the Assembly and Senate have come together on this important proposal to assure the safety of students.

This bill directs the State Education Department, in conjunction with the Department of Health, to develop rules and regulations about the risk of traumatic brain injury to students, prevention and intervention to protect students from immediate and long-term consequences of such injuries. Nationwide, 135,000 children and teens are treated in emergency departments for traumatic brain injuries related to sports or recreation. It is therefore imperative that schools and their teachers know how to respond.

The legislation gives schools, parents and students the information they need to make informed decisions about mild traumatic brain injury. First, information will be posted on state web sites and included in any parental permission forms. Second, teachers, coaches, school nurses and other frontline school personnel will be trained about mild traumatic brain injury. Through regulation, the commissioners of education and health can establish training protocols that are both efficient as well as effective by using such options as on-line programs. With this training, school personnel can identify students in danger and, erring on the side of caution, remove a student who has or who may have suffered a mild traumatic brain injury from a game, competition or physical education class and direct the student to seek medical care for diagnosis and treatment. The legislation further protects students by requiring a physician to allow a student to return to sports activities.



Arts Roundtable

As Assembly Education Committee Chair, I convened a roundtable of stakeholders in art education including representatives from the State Education Department, New York City Department of Education, Center for Arts Education and art, music, dance and theatre teachers from around the state. Everyone shared their ideas and recommendations about how to provide arts education in this difficult environment.

Other Legislation Reported by the Assembly Education Committee in 2011

A6611 (Nolan): Allows certain schools to contract with BOCES for criminal background checks. This legislation will provide a valuable service to certain non-public schools to contract with BOCES for background checks to hire and screen their teachers to protect the safety of the students.

A7230A (Nolan): Directs the chancellor of the city school district of the City of New York to inventory and report on the outdoor schoolyards of such district.

A3127A (O'Donnell): This bill would authorize the City of New York to award contracts for transportation of pre-kindergarten and early intervention children through a request for proposal process. A contract for transportation would include employee

protection provisions rationally related to hiring, retaining and promoting a pool of qualified employees.

A6237A (Robinson): Directs the commissioner to develop and conduct programs designed to prevent suicide among youths.

A3289 (Weisenberg): Allows students who have an IEP to be required to take only one regents examination in any given day.

A2417 (Heastie): Protects children in New York City from child abuse and maltreatment in educational settings. This bill would change the definition of a child to include persons under the age of 21 who are enrolled in the New York City School District.



Career and Technical Education

Students and administrators from New York City Career and Technical Schools visited with me and other members of the Assembly Education Committee in Albany.

Public Hearings

Assembly Hearing on Environmental Quality in Schools

The Assembly Committee on Education heard testimony from the State Education Department, New York City Department of Education, environmental advocates and community groups about environmental hazards in school buildings and public efforts to improve environmental quality in schools. The New York State Board of Regents has adopted guiding principles about environmental quality in schools. Among these principles are a safe, secure and healthy school environment for all school children and the right for every child, parent, and school employee to be informed about environmental health issues and hazards in their schools. At the hearing witnesses testified about PCB's in the schools, environmental impact statements for school leases and "green buildings." The Education Committee plans to review the testimony and will study the issue in greater detail in the next legislative session.

Assembly Education Budget Hearing RE: Governor's Budget

The Assembly Committee on Education also held a public hearing to examine the Governor's proposed budget for 2011-2012. We heard from various educational stakeholders throughout the state including the State Education Department, New York City Department of Education, BOCES, Council of School Superintendents (CSS), Council of School Supervisors and Administrators (CSA), New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), United Federation of Teachers (UFT), the New York State School Boards Association (NYSSBA) and other educational advocates. Many of those testifying explained that the cuts in the Governor's budget would have severe consequences for the students of New York State. The Assembly Education Committee reviewed these recommendations and through the budget negotiations were able to win partial restorations for education. We worked successfully to restore \$230 million in general support to public schools statewide, including \$50 million going directly to New York City.

Assemblywoman Catherine Nolan, Chair

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